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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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With Contributions by:

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""

Another long and tiring week. I really didn't have any ideas for an
editorial topic this week, so rather than bore you with tales of our
recent New England weather, or what's happening with our economy these
days (like you don't already know!), I'll just jump everyone right into
this week's issue! So, sit back and relax, and enjoy another weekly
edition of A-ONE!

Until next time...

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                         PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                       compiled by Joe Mirando
                         joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, another week has come and gone, and
there were a whopping 11 new messages in the NewsGroup this week. I'm
going to add them to the bunch I've collected from the past couple of
weeks, and we'll see if we can put a decent question-and-answer column
together, okay?

Good. I THOUGHT you'd agree. [grin]

... But that doesn't mean that I'm not going to talk politics this week.
Okay, okay, stop with the groaning, you in the back row over there.

There has been a lot of stuff going on that I think we should talk
about... or at least think about.

All of what I'm going to talk about this week deals with former VP Dick
Cheney and his assertion that there are two CIA memos out there somewhere
that prove that torture works, and a bit about the 'situation' with Nancy
Pelosi and her CIA briefing.

Well first of all, let's look at torture. You can call it whatever you
want... "extreme interrogation", "enhanced techniques" or whatever else,
but that doesn't change the fact that it is indeed torture.

Waterboarding is torture. We considered it torture 60 years ago, we considered it torture 40 years ago, we considered it torture 20 years ago. So what's changed between then and now? The circumstances? The urgency? My friend, those are exactly the times when we should stand firm and for our principles. If we don't have our principles, we have nothing. Of course, we were repeatedly told that we needed to be afraid, that the world hated us, that we were in danger of imminent attack. Yes, the world was now a more dangerous place than it had been.

Really? Is it really more dangerous now than it was when the World Trade Center was bombed the first time? Is it more dangerous now than when the Marine barracks were bombed in Lebanon? More dangerous than when the USS Cole was attacked? Or is it that we stopped wanting or looking for friends. Anyone... any country... that didn't fall in line behind us and automatically accept what we told them was now a 'bad country'. Remember the time, money and attention wasted on "Freedom Fries"? Give me a break.

Okay, let's get back to 'Dick'. Dick Cheney said recently that there were two memos that prove that torture worked to provide information that kept Americans safe. He also said that he was going to ask the CIA to declassify and release them. And he did ask.

Just a day ago now, the CIA refused the request, saying: "The process for Mandatory Declassification Review is governed by Executive Order 12958, as amended."

Well Executive Order 12958 was the one Clinton put into effect to get things declassified sooner. It resulted in tens to hundreds of thousands of pages of formerly classified documents being released. It's a long, long document, but you can find it from its official source here: http://tinyurl.com/prlh6g . I had to shorten the URL in order to format it here (It was 95 characters long, and anything over 78 or so gives our format fits), but it's the government's Federal Register site... it's not something that one side or the other dreamed up as propaganda... it's fact. THIS is exactly what the Executive Order is, not my interpretation, not some scary misrepresentation. This IS the stuff.

Anyway. This particular Executive Order had the effect of declassifying tons of stuff... like what the government knows about UFOs and who shot JFK. Yeah, remember it now? It was big news back in 1995.

Well, the CIA referencing this Executive Order is a bit misleading. Did you notice up above where the CIA spokesman said "as amended"?

The word 'amended' could well be replaced with "gutted" or even "perverted" or "rendered useless" where national security is concerned. And it's ALL about national security. That's because, eight years later, there was another order; Executive Order 13292, that set this one on its ear. The URL for EO 13292 is: http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/pdf/03-7736.pdf. EO 13292 didn't 'replace' EO 12959, it 'amended' it. It not only made it harder to declassify things that any particular president had decided to term 'national security', it reaffirmed the VICE President's ability to classify things too.

Now... WHICH Vice President could it possibly have been that originally classified the 2 memos that former VP Cheney says can prove that torture works?

That's right. Mr. Cheney requested two memos be released that he may well

have "locked up" his-own-darned self. Proving your point by asking a government agency to release memos that you yourself may have told them they couldn't... What a slick new take on Senator McCarthy's "I've got a top secret memo in my pocket that proves it... but I can't show you" sleight of hand.

Mr. Cheney has also left the impression that he's eager to talk to Congress about what works and what doesn't, and why waterboarding is now not torture. Given the fact that Cheney has been somewhat cagey about being placed under oath, and the fact that he's so sure that waterboarding is safe and effective, I say we do away with the oath and bring in the waterboarding equipment and save the Congress some time.

No need to worry about the former VP's heart... he's already told us that waterboarding constitutes very little risk to health and safety. Heck, it shouldn't take more than 182 instances of waterboarding, right? [evil grin]

The other thing I want to talk about it the controversy surrounding Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. It's recently come out that she was briefed on techniques used with 'terror suspects', and the CIA now says that she was told that waterboarding was used. She says that she was told that they felt it was legal, but that it hadn't been used.

So now our good friends on the right are bellowing about Speaker Pelosi having known about waterboarding being used, and what a terrible thing that is.

What it comes down to is that they think she's guilty of supporting something they once said isn't torture, was never used, and was necessary anyway.

The fact is that National Security Briefings are kept secret. She wouldn't be allowed to even acknowledge what she'd been told. Note taking is not allowed, and she had no recourse if she found something unacceptable.

One thing that no one seems to be talking about... yet... is that she was not the only Congressperson briefed at that time. Porter Goss, Republican Congressman from Florida, was evidently briefed at the same time. Why hasn't Mr. Goss come forward on either side? Why hasn't he offered his recollections of the briefing?

Could it possibly be that, in addition to being a Congressman, he was also director of the CIA shortly after Executive order 13292 took effect? I don't know. Perhaps someone should ask him.

Well, enough of that. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'PPera' posts this about his new Atari forum:

"http://ppera.07x.net/forum/index.php
The reasons for starting it are described in Welcome thread. I hope that we can do some things better than it goes at moment..."

Edward Baiz tells ppera:

"Thanks. I will check it out. Nothing is better than talking with a bunch of Atarians."

Vincent RiviŁre posts this about the Atari Coldfire Project:

"Atari Coldfire Project is back !
http://acp.atari.org/news.html
http://acp.atari.org/news_de.html
http://acp.atari.org/news_fr.html
The schema of the new computer is now available there, and it rocks!
That's a new computer Atari-compatible based on a ColdFire CPU."

'GMan' tells Vincent:

"I'd much prefer SATA over IDE"

Martin Byttebier adds:

"I'm surely interested to get one to replace my dead Hades."

Edward Baiz adds his thoughts:

"You and me both Martin. I am on the list even though I will be upgrading my Falcon with the CT63 and the CTPCI. Never hurts to have a backup system."

'KJMann' posts this about a new video adapter:

"After some careful thought and some trial and error, I have come up with a design for a Video Adapter for the Atari ST/TT systems that will provide S-Video and Composite Video for all Atari ST/TT systems that use the DIN 13 pin Video Port.

This Unit Will Work Even if your ST/TT Does not Have an RF Modulator Built in.

This Adapter not only provides a Beautiful S-video Signal and a Decent Composite Signal, but will only cost about $60 USD as a complete unit. (not just a board with components)

It also fixes the problem with over Drivin signals coming from the RGB lines. So the Picture you get will be Bright and Crisp with no blurred Colors or that Grainy look.

As an Atari ST User Of many years I have always taken note of the fact that not only is it expensive to buy a refurbished monitor (shipping etc.) but It is also very inconvenient to have an extra monitor set up in the house. This unit works in NTSC only (I'm Still working on a PAL version). The S-Video is so Good on this that I can't hardly tell the difference between the adapter and an Original SC1224 RGB monitor.

I don't know how soon that I will have them available but I hoping to
have them ready to ship to Video61 no later than Mid May.

There's a mock up of what the Unit will look like completed on atari
Age in the ST/TT discussion area."

Edward tells KJMann:

"Sounds real good. It should sell. I will check it out."

'Phantom' asks for opinions on protecting ideas an inventions:

"Has anyone gave any thought to how we can protect our,
intellectual property when we post to this group or other
forums?

Most of us have came up with new ideas, projects and new
ways to do things, and posted them here in the past for others
to use. Most of us have creativity and want to share it with others
who use a Atari Computer or emulator.

But I don't want some company making a fortune off my ideas, unless
I get my part of the fortune. Working to make someone else rich
while getting nothing in return is not the correct way to do things.

You might want to check out the following before posting that next
idea, invention or etc.

http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/30/trolling-for-patents-to-fight-
patent-trolls/

I've just recently started looking at how big this problem can be.
I'd like to here from anyone who has more knowledge on this and
how we can best protect what we post."

Ed Edelenbos replies:

"Y'know, there was a time when I was as Atari-geek as the best. I really
find it hard to believe that anyone is going to miss out on a fortune by
having Atari ideas stolen in todays world, though."

Ray Collins adds:

"Ideas are a dime a dozen. Everyone has them, but the successful people
put in the hard work to execute them.

My million dollar idea would be a handheld ST or Atari 8-bit in the size
of a Game Boy but with a keyboard like a blackberry. Add wireless and
sell it for $100. There's an idea for someone to make a lot of money
with."

Lonny Pursell adds his thoughts:

"In short don't post to a public forum. Or if you do have your idea
patented BEFORE you go blabbing in a public forum. Keep a legal staff on

the payroll, and... <insert funny rewind sound> What?! Lol Seriously? I
fail to see how that is even relevant to this platform. [I] Have to agree
with Ed."

'Charlie' adds this:

"Its obvious that a person should be rewarded for there good ideal,
whats difficult is the fact which faces us that if something is good
then everybody likes then wants it... but has to be proven before the
wheels go in motion.. where as opposite bad i deals get frowned upon
and disregarded....

My only input might be, have your ideal done or at least done in
rough, and only expose the thought of the ideal, not the real full
program...

Especially if on your atari, I can't see it being that
revolutionary, but who knows... you know, why build a trampoline for
people with no legs!

so don't be worried cause your not the one going to do all the hard
work, its just your idea until you commission on a team to
debug,write,develop and launch this ideal.. its only hypothetical "dust in
the wind" as said.

I have ideals too but its child like to just sit here and believe with
the five years programming experience i have that my program is going
to make me wealthy.

it just is a positive step towards the contribution to the atari
computer realm. Exposure is another good point. I'll stop now.. blab
blab blah..."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next time, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Videogame Stats Tank After Boom!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""   New Wii MotionPlus Soon!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Video-Game Statistics Plunge After Boom in 2008

Sales of video games, consoles and accessories fell 17 percent in April, to $1 billion versus $1.2 billion in the same period last year, according to NPD Group. Year-to-date sales also saw a drop. Sales for the year were $5.28 billion, down from $5.48 billion.

The decrease for April may be steep, but analysts say there's no need to worry.

"While April sales might appear soft on the surface, it's important to remember that April is being compared against a month (April 2008) that realized nearly 50 percent growth over April 2007," said Anita Frazier, a video-game and toy analyst with NPD. "This year's performance still represents the second-best performance for the industry in the month of April, besting April 2007, which is the previous second-place holder, by 26 percent."

Sales of portable game systems have increased because of Nintendo's release of the DSi. The Nintendo DS category accounted for 31 percent of total sales in April, according to NPD. Despite the portables' success, there will be a weakness in sales for other platforms this month with a year-over-year decrease in Wii hardware sales.

"Taking that into account, Wii unit sales are still very strong and only followed the DS this month in terms of dollar and unit sales contribution to total industry sales," Frazier said.

Video-game software took the hardest hit in comparison to hardware and accessories. Software sales in April were down 23 percent from April 2008, dropping from $660.1 billion to $510.7 billion

"The number of new releases this month is fairly comparable to what was introduced last April, but GTA IV - on both PS3 and the 360 - sold nearly one million more units last April than the entire top 10 list did this year," Frazier said.

April 2008 also included the release of Mario Kart for Wii, which has remained a top-selling game for the past year. The game is also on April's top 10 list along with the Wii Fit with balance board, Wii Play with Remote, and Pokemon Platinum Version for the Nintendo DS.

"This really illustrates the impact of comparing against a month when there were several blockbuster titles new to the market," Frazier said.

Because other big game titles weren't expected in April, it would have been a good month to release a new game, according to Frazier.

While sales appeared bleak last month, analysts don't expect the statistics to get better in the short term.

"Given how strong the growth was in the industry last year, there are still some months ahead where year-over-year comparisons may be difficult, but May should be an easier comparison than the last two months have been," Frazier said.

Despite the tough month for the video-game results, NPD said the

company's monthly consumer-spending indicator shows that consumers are least likely to cut spending on video games compared to other consumer goods.

May releases to watch out for include InFAMOUS, Fallout 3, Patapon 2, and UFC.

Nintendo Prepares To Set New Wii Gizmo into Motion

There's nothing all that charming about Nintendo's latest gadget.

It's not as zany as a zapper or as sexy as a steering wheel. It doesn't even tell you whether you're losing weight. However, the gamemaker is hoping a small cube-shaped device called Wii MotionPlus will take the Wii's motion-sensing controls to a new level of precision.

It's no secret the wrist-flicking Wii Remote's lack of accuracy has long been the console's clunky downfall. The Wii MotionPlus, available beginning June 8, successfully defeats that dilemma by using gyroscopic sensors to exactly mimic gamers' hand movements, making such activities as sword fighting, disc throwing and golfing look seamless on screen.

"The great thing about this particular new technology, which isn't always true for other new technologies, is that we immediately saw the benefits of it," said "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10" senior producer Jason Shenkman. "Before I even touched it or got my hands on it, I knew exactly what having a gyroscope in our possession would do for this game."

Electronic Arts' "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10" will be the first game bundled with the Wii MotionPlus. Shenkman insists the increased sensitivity doesn't boost difficulty because instant feedback helps gamers before their shots.

Nintendo has been pairing cute peripheral gadgets with games since launching the Wii, such as the Wii Wheel, Wii Zapper and Wii Balance Board, the scale-ish device packaged with "Wii Fit." Just how Nintendo plans to market the obscure Wii MotionPlus accessory - or why such technology wasn't originally included in the controller - is unclear.

"We are always looking at ways to enhance the gaming experience for consumers," said Denise Kaigler, Nintendo vice president of corporate affairs. "This was another way of enhancing the gaming experience, and consumers will hopefully choose to experience that more immersive type of gameplay and enjoy it."

Only five games have so far been confirmed to employ the new functionality. The most prominent is Nintendo's own "Wii Sports Resort," a beachy follow-up to the popular "Wii Sports." Besides "Tiger Woods," the other games are Electronic Arts' "Grand Slam Tennis," Capcom's "Virtua Tennis 2009" and Ubisoft's slice-and-shoot-'em-up sequel "Red Steel 2."

Though the original "Red Steel" was one of the most anticipated games to debut alongside the Wii in 2006, the first-person samurai shooter's wonky fidelity left many gamers feeling let down. Creative director Jason Vandenberghe promises Wii MotionPlus technology will remedy that

in "Red Steel 2."

"One of the cool things is that with Wii MotionPlus, we know how hard
you have swung the remote," said Vandenberghe. "That means we can ask
the player to have a more physical experience, like having enemies who
are wearing armor that players will have to hit harder with their sword."

If the blockbuster sales of the Wii Balance Board with "Wii Fit" are any
indication, gamers want the new contraption even if it's not compatible
with their old titles.

Wedbush Morgan game analyst Michael Pachter believes Wii MotionPlus'
price - $19.99 for one, $49.99 if bundled with "Wii Sports Resort" - is
right for cash-strapped consumers. He anticipates that over 30 million
Wii owners will pick up the new accessory in the first year.

"Some people will find Wii MotionPlus really appealing, and some people
won't understand it and will wait until they're told by their friends
they need it," said Pachter.

Nintendo is likely to promote Wii MotionPlus and announce new games that
use the technology at next month's Electronic Entertainment Expo, where
the gadget was first unveiled last year. Rumors have been circulating
that Nintendo competitors Microsoft and Sony may announce their own
motion-control technologies for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 consoles
at E3.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

EU Fines Intel Record $1.45 Billion for Sales Tactics

The European Union fined Intel Corp. a record euro1.06 billion ($1.45
billion) on Wednesday and ordered the world's biggest maker of computer
chips to stop illegal sales tactics that shut out Silicon Valley rival
AMD.

The fine, which exceeded a euro899 million monopoly abuse penalty
imposed on Microsoft Corp. last year, was denounced by Intel, which
plans to appeal to an EU court within 60 days.

AMD's stock jumped in midday trading Wednesday, while Intel shares were
up slightly.

"Given that Intel has harmed millions of European consumers by
deliberately acting to keep competitors out of the market for over five
years, the size of the fine should come as no surprise," said EU
Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes.

"Intel did not compete fairly, frustrating innovation and reducing

consumer welfare in the process," she said.

The European Commission also told Intel to immediately cease some sales practices in Europe, though it refused to say what those were. Intel said it was "mystified" about what it was supposed to change but would comply with the "extremely ambiguous" EU order.

Intel, based in Santa Clara, Calif., has about 80 percent of the world's personal computer microprocessor market and faces just one real rival, Advanced Micro Devices Inc., which has its headquarters just three miles from Intel in Sunnyvale, Calif.

The two companies have been fighting for years over what AMD claims is Intel's intimidation of computer makers into striking exclusive deals for the chips they use in their new machines.

AMD claims the rebates and financial incentives that Intel offers to those companies for buying more Intel chips are designed to prevent AMD from gaining market share. AMD argues that Intel's volume discounts are sometimes so steep that AMD can't cut its own prices enough to compete without losing money on the sales.

In siding with AMD to wrap up an eight-year probe, the European Commission said Intel broke EU competition law by exploiting its dominant position, thereby limiting customer choice.

The EU said Intel gave rebates to computer manufacturers Acer Inc., Dell Inc., Hewlett-Packard Co., Lenovo Group Ltd. and NEC Corp. for buying all or most of their chips from Intel and paid them to stop or delay the launch of computers based on AMD chips.

The commission said price discounts were linked to promises from computer manufacturers to restrict AMD purchases. It said such discounts were left off Intel's official contracts because the company "went to great lengths to cover up many of its anticompetitive actions."

Officials said they learned of them through e-mails and statements from businesses, some seized during surprise raids.

Bruce Sewell, Intel's general counsel, said the case was based on weak evidence and unfair inferences from a small number of documents.

Intel president and CEO Paul Otellini said "there has been absolutely zero harm to consumers."

But AMD Chief Executive Dirk Meyer said the decision was "an important step toward establishing a truly competitive market."

"AMD has consistently been a technology innovation leader and we are looking forward to the move from a world in which Intel ruled, to one which is ruled by customers," Meyer said in a statement.

Tom McCoy, AMD's executive vice president for legal affairs, said the ruling would bring consumers "greater choice, value and innovation."

Regulators said Intel also paid Germany's biggest electronics retailer, Media Saturn Holding, from 2002 to 2007 to stock only Intel-based computers at its MediaMarkt superstores, even in Dresden, Germany, where many AMD chips are made.

The decision does not affect Intel's pricing strategy outside Europe but could have an important effect in the United States and Asia.

This week, one of the top U.S. antitrust officials, Christine Varney, signaled a return to trustbusting as the Obama administration dropped a strict interpretation of antitrust rules that saw regulators shun major action against alleged monopolies during the Bush years.

Kroes said Varney's words gave her hope that the EU's current "close cooperation" and information exchanges with the Federal Trade Commission "could go in a very positive way" in the future. The FTC upgraded a probe into Intel last year.

"The more competition authorities are joining us in our philosophy, the better it is for it is a global world," she said. "The more who are doing the job ... and with the same approach then the better it is."

Intel's Sewell said the concept that rebates could damage competition was an area "where the law is now in flux" and regulators were testing the boundaries.

"There is a line of thought developing primarily out of the European antitrust authorities but also perhaps being picked up by the Japanese and the Koreans that suggest that rebates can be anticompetitive," he said.

EU regulators said they calculated Intel's fine - 4 percent of last year's $37.6 billion in worldwide sales - on the value of its European chip sales over the five years and three months that it broke the law. Europeans buy some 30 percent of all computer chips sold every year.

The EU could have gone even higher. EU antitrust rules allow for a fine of up to 10 percent of a company's annual global revenue for each year of bad behavior.

The EU said the fine must be paid within three months. The money eventually goes into the EU budget, reducing the funding it seeks from European taxpayers.

European consumers group BEUC welcomed the fine and urged customers to seek damages in civil courts.

The EU said rebates like the ones Intel offered PC makers, with discounts for large orders, are illegal when a monopoly company makes them conditional on buying less of a rival's products or not buying them at all. EU officials said the discounts were so steep that only a competitor that sold chips for less than they cost to make would have any chance of grabbing customers.

According to regulators, AMD offered 1 million free chips to one manufacturer, but it ultimately could only accept 160,000 to avoid losing a rebate on many millions of other chips from Intel.

Apple to Microsoft: It's On

Are you sick of the constant Mac-versus-PC bickering? If so, I hate to be the bearer of bad news: Apple has unleashed its latest batch of "Get

a Mac" TV ads, one of which takes direct aim at Microsoft's "Laptop Hunters" series of ads.

With "Elimination," Apple responds directly to the Laptop Hunters campaign for the first time. John Hodgman's PC character brings along a few of his friends to find the best computer for a shopper named Megan. Megan wants a computer without viruses or crashes or headaches, and ultimately chooses a Mac.

While Microsoft's main message seems to be that price is the deciding factor in computing purchases (along with the wide variety of Windows PCs), Apple continues to push the message that the Mac provides a trouble-free computing experience (though if you spend enough time around Mac users, you'll discover that yes, Macs can have issues too).

Following it up is "Customer Care," where PC must deal with a frustrating series of tech support calls. The final of the three ads, "PC Choice Chat," features PC hosting a radio call-in show where he gives advice on computer purchases.

Microsoft's Laptop Hunters campaign may be Microsoft's strongest ad campaign in some time, and has drawn praise and criticism from all corners of the tech universe, as well as debates over which company's has the better ad campaign. It may go without saying, but when you get people talking about your ads, you're probably doing something right.

Apple posted the new ads on its site for your viewing pleasure (or *displeasure*, depending on your point of view). If you're looking for some grown-up reasons to buy either a Mac or a PC, read Harry McCracken's Eight Reasons Your Next Computer Should Be A Mac and Eight Reasons Your Next Computer Should Be A PC. If you're sick of the whole computing platform war, I'm terribly sorry. And to everyone else, debate away!

Cyberbullying, More Than Just "Messing Around"

If may affect as many as half of U.S. teenagers, can be as bad or worse than being beaten up in the schoolyard, and is so relentless and emotionally devastating that suicide can sometimes be the result.

Whether it is through emails, instant messaging, cell phones, texting or websites, cyberbullying is a growing problem.

In the past 10 years 37 U.S. states have adopted legislation mandating that schools implement anti-bullying statutes.

"It is becoming something that people recognize as a significant issue as more and more students start talking about it, and unfortunately, as these extreme cases of suicide and students hurting themselves is becoming more prevalent," said Dan Tarplin, the New York Educational Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which fights anti-Semitism and bigotry.

Unlike schoolyard taunts or fights, Tarplin said the anonymity of electronic media can embolden bullies and its pervasiveness enables a nasty comment, a harsh remark, an unflattering photo or video to be sent to countless numbers of people in an instant.

"With electronic forms of bullying there is no refuge," said Scott Hirschfeld, director of curriculum and training in ADL's education division, who created its program to raise awareness to counter cyberbullying.

"Here it is 24/7. It is always online. Even if you turn off your computer you know that Web page is up, or that people are spreading this rumor about you. The relentlessness of it is very psychologically devastating."

Teenagers at a day-long ADL conference said they thought cyberbullying was "just messing around" until they heard John Halligan speak about his 13-year-old son Ryan, who committed suicide in 2003 after years of bullying, both on and offline.

"He was continually harassed about being potentially gay," Halligan, a former manager at IBM who now tells Ryan's story at schools around the country, said in an interview.

Halligan only discovered the extent of the torment his son had endured after his death.

"He was trying to manage the situation on his own, which a lot of these kids do, tragically," he said. "I never anticipated that his peers would become such a danger to him."

Halligan encourages bystanders, students who are aware of cyberbullying and choose to do nothing, to use the power of peer pressure to stop it.

His message to parents is to speak to their children.

"Make sure you turn that computer off, often, and have a sit-down conversation about what is going on in their lives. Create as much opportunity as you can to allow them to express their feelings and what they might be going through."

Halligan was instrumental in getting a Bullying Prevention Law passed in Vermont seven months after Ryan's death.

For those states that don't already have one, Tarplin said the ADL's civil rights department has created model legislation to help lawmakers lobby for laws to address bullying and cyberbullying.

"It would make schools and other institutions accountable to insure that prevention measures were happening in their institutions," he said.

Yahoo Wins Round in Oregon Nude Photo Court Battle

Yahoo Inc. has won a legal battle over its long delay in removing nude photos that an Oregon woman claimed her ex-boyfriend posted on its Web site without her knowledge or permission.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reaffirmed that Internet service providers such as Yahoo are generally protected from liability for materials published or posted on their sites by outside parties.

But the court left open the possibility that the woman, Cecilia Barnes,

could sue Yahoo over whether it had promised to remove the photos and the unauthorized profile, amounting to a breach of contract.

Barnes filed a lawsuit in 2005 in Portland claiming her ex-boyfriend not only posted nude photos taken of her without her knowledge or consent, but also created a fraudulent profile with personal information and posed as her in an online chat room to solicit sex.

As the court noted: "Before long, men whom Barnes did not know were peppering her office with e-mails, phone calls and personal visits, all in the expectation of sex."

"This case stems from a dangerous, cruel and highly indecent use of the Internet for the apparent purpose of revenge," Judge Diarmuid O'Scannlain wrote.

According to court documents, even after Barnes notified Yahoo the profile was fraudulent and unauthorized, the Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company failed to remove it for months – despite media attention – until Barnes filed a lawsuit.

Nonetheless, the court rejected arguments that Yahoo was negligent for failing to immediately remove the material.

In the opinion issued last week by O'Scannlain, the court said Yahoo was protected under a 1996 federal law that gives broad immunity to service providers to encourage the open exchange of material on the Internet by its users. The logic was that service providers shouldn't be liable for what their users do online, similar to the way phone companies aren't responsible for private conversations used to plan crimes.

Based on that provision, courts across the country have repeatedly sided with service providers in disputes over users' conduct.

Barnes' attorney, Thomas Rask of Portland, said Internet service providers are getting a "blanket immunity" that "doesn't make sense."

"We've always argued you can't be immune for everything," Rask said.

Rask said Barnes will now pursue a breach of contract claim, adding that his client was "happy the court allowed her case to move forward at least in part." Barnes claimed that a Yahoo official promised to immediately remove the photos when a local TV station was preparing a report, but never followed through.

Yahoo officials released a statement Monday saying they were pleased with the ruling and were evaluating any breach of contract claim.

Greedy Gadgets Suck Global Resources

A new study from the International Energy Agency predicts that by 2030, the energy demands of gadgets globally will collectively drain an amount of electricity equivalent to the total power consumption of two of the world's largest developed countries.

According to the intergovernmental organization, consumer gear currently accounts for 15 percent of household electricity consumption, and its

share of the total is rapidly rising. Without new policies, noted IEA Executive Director Nobuo Tanaka, the energy consumed by high-tech gear will double by 2022 and increase threefold by 2030.

"This increase up to 1700 TWh is equivalent to the current combined total residential electricity consumption of the United States and Japan," Tanaka said. "It would also cost households around the world $200 billion in electricity bills and require the addition of approximately 280 gigawatts of new generating capacity between now and 2030."

The good news is that higher-efficiency technologies are already available that could cut this demand in half, Tanaka noted. "Many mobile devices are already far more efficient in their use of power than other devices which run off a main electricity supply. Because extending the battery life of a mobile device is a selling point, manufacturers place an emphasis on designing products which require very little power."

However, Tanaka believes that little will be accomplished in the area of world energy consumption reductions without government intervention. "Without new policies, the projected energy demand from information and communications technologies and consumer electronics will undermine our energy security and climate change mitigation," Tanaka said.

Government intervention is needed because consumers currently are not well informed about the problem and have little personal economic incentive to reduce gadget power consumption when their individual use is so small, Tanaka noted. Moreover, the entire gadget supply chain is currently geared toward delivering products with the lowest possible up-front cost, which often makes low energy consumption a secondary design and marketing priority.

The new IEA study notes that the share of electricity currently consumed by refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers and other larger household appliances has actually declined of late due to the positive impact of energy-efficiency programs. On the downside, the growing popularity of electronic gear is acting to eat up the savings.

The IEA, which has 28 member countries, notes that there are nearly two billion television sets already in use, with an average of over 1.3 sets in each home having access to electricity. The ongoing shift to digital TV will only exacerbate the problem as consumers attach digital adapter boxes to their home-entertainment systems, adding to their existing energy budgets.

Though some power savings can be realized through better equipment and components, the largest improvement opportunity will come from making hardware and software work together more effectively to ensure that energy is used only when, and to the extent, needed, Tanaka observed. Moreover, there's no time like the present to get started.

Mobile phones and laptops are good examples of just what can be achieved when people realize that energy consumption really matters. "Where no such commercial drivers exist, governments must step in to ensure that we make the most of every energy efficiency opportunity," Tanaka said.

Up to 30 percent energy savings are possible right now for no additional lifetime costs, Tanaka said. Moreover, up to 50 percent energy savings are available using current technologies at small cost, and that figure may actually be a zero net cost if avoided carbon cost is considered.

Apple Releases Mac OS X 10.5.7

Apple on Tuesday released the latest update for its Leopard operating system, Mac OS X 10.5.7, bringing with it more than 20 bug fixes as well as a number of security updates.

Among the improvements in the update are additional RAW image support for third-party cameras, improved performance of video playback for recent Macs with Nvidia graphics chips, and resolution for an issue with the Dvorak keyboard layout in 10.5.6.

Also included in 10.5.7 are patches that help resolve issues with third-party network services, such as improved reliability for syncing contacts with Yahoo, and a fix for some problems that could occur when logging into Gmail. The update also improves the reliability and accuracy of several of OS X's Dashboard widgets, like Unit Converter, Weather, Stocks, and Movies.

Besides the general issues resolved, 10.5.7 includes updates for specific Apple applications, as well. iCal sports improved reliability for both CalDav and syncing with MobileMe, while Mail now has better reliability for syncing Notes and fixes a bug where the BCC field populated incorrectly in certain cases. Apple also improved consistency with Parental Controls and fixed a bug with the system when using full-screen games and Fast User Switching, and also fixed several printing issues, including adding the ability for non-admin users to add and remove printers.

In addition, there are a number of security fixes in the update for the Apache Web server, PHP, CoreGraphics, and more. Among the fixes are patches for three separate vulnerabilities discovered as part of Tipping Point's Zero Day Initiative, which appear to be the same ones demonstrated at the CanSecWest security conference last March. The fixes address issues in Apple Type Services, QuickDraw Manager, and WebKit, each of which could lead to arbitrary code execution.

Apple also released Mac OS X Server 10.5.7 Update, which rolls out fixes for a number of systems, including Client Management, Directory Services, AFP Server, System Image Utility, and more. The update also includes improved kernel stability and a number of security enhancements which had not been detailed at this writing.

The Mac OS X 10.5.7 update is available from Software Update and is recommended for all users running Mac OS X Leopard. A combo updater, weighing in at a hefty 729MB, is also available for those upgrading from versions of Leopard previous to 10.5.6.

Meet Gyy, The First Solar Powered Netbook

A solar powered notebook PC has been an awesome no-brainer of a great idea for years. But until now, laptops have been too power-hungry and solar technology has not been efficient enough to make this green dream a reality. The time is now upon us that we can bask in the sun of new

day of endless and cordless laptop use. Meet Gyy, the first solar powered netbook.

Spanish company iUnika is set to launch next month an uber-cheap (and uber wimpy) netbook that runs on solar power. Coming in at about $200, Gyy weighs only 700 grams, runs on Linux (hence the small price) and is made of biodegradable materials.

Make no mistake, the Gyy won't be a gaming netbook, as it runs on a 400Mhz MIPS processor and has only 128MB of RAM. On the good side though, you get a 64GB solid-state storage space, three USB ports, Ethernet, and Wi-Fi.

Gyy's display is not on the brilliant side, either, with only an 800-by-480 resolution on the 8-inch screen. But these rather antiquated specs have their advantage, as you would never run out of power (virtually that is) on the Gyy, thanks to the solar panel mounted on the lid of the netbook.

The solar panel charges the Gyy's internal battery and you can check the state of the battery via the small LCD display on the lower left corner of the netbook. Initially, the Gyy will be available only in Europe in June.

Here's the manufacturer's Website, if you're good with Spanish.

Windows 7 Available Before End of the Year

US software giant Microsoft confirmed on Monday that Windows 7, its new-generation computer operating system, would be available before the end of the year.

"Windows 7 is tracking well for holiday availability," said Bill Veghte, senior vice president of the Windows Business at Microsoft.

In a statement, Microsoft said it is "anticipating that the next version of its client operating system, Windows 7, will be available to customers in time for the holiday shopping season."

Microsoft last week released a nearly-final version of Window 7 known as Windows 7 Release Candidate and invited feedback from the public.

Users were invited to download the Windows 7 software from Microsoft's official website and install it on computers in a public test of the operating system's capabilities.

Copies of Windows 7 RC have also been made available to developers and early reviews have praised the operating system for its stability and for avoiding problems that plagued its predecessor Vista.

Complaints about Vista included that it was not compatible with some software designed for the previous-generation Windows XP operating system and that it was too much for smaller capacity "netbooks" or older computers to handle.

Gmail Makes Switching E-Mail Services Easier

Gmail is making the frustrating process of switching e-mail providers
just a bit easier. Google introduced a new feature for its Webmail
service that allows new users to easily import all their e-mail and
contacts from Hotmail, Yahoo, or AOL accounts, just by typing their
username and password.

The feature allows new Gmail users to enter their Webmail account details
into Google's service, and over the next 24 to 48 hours all their e-mails
and contacts will be automatically imported to their new account. A 30-day
test-drive mode is also provided, giving you time to decide whether you
like Gmail.

The new importing feature is available for all new users, and will be
slowly rolled-out for older accounts over the coming weeks. Older users
can still use POP3 mail fetching and importing contacts via a CSV file
while they wait for the new feature.

Google also added a few more features for Gmail yesterday. The
recently-launched standalone contacts manager can now unify all your
contacts by importing contacts from Outlook, Outlook Express, Hotmail and
Yahoo in CSV format, and OS X Address Book in vCard format. A birthday
field was added upon user request as well.

The Google Calendar app got an update and can now support tasks, in a
similar way to how Gmail handles them. While they appear in a separate
calendar in the app, Google Calendar tasks cannot send SMS notifications
or synchronized with other applications.

Gmail is trailing webmail leaders Yahoo, AOL and Hotmail, with
approximately 29.6 million users. It will be interesting to see over the
coming months whether this balance will shift with the introduction of
this easy to switch feature in Gmail.

Hackers Launch Phishing Attack on Facebook Users

Hackers launched an attack on Facebook's 200 million users on Thursday,
successfully gathering passwords from some of them in the latest
campaign to prey on members of the popular social networking site.

Facebook spokesman Barry Schnitt said on Thursday that the site was in
the process of cleaning up damage from the attack.

He said that Facebook was blocking compromised accounts.

Schnitt declined to say how many accounts had been compromised.

The hackers got passwords through what is known as a phishing attack,
breaking into accounts of some Facebook members, then sending e-mails to
friends and urging them to click on links to fake websites.

Those sites were designed to look like the Facebook home page. The
victims were directed to log back in to the site, but actually logged
into the one controlled by the hackers, unwittingly giving away their
passwords.

The purpose of such attacks is generally identify theft and to spread spam.

The fake domains include www.151.im, www.121.im and www.123.im. Facebook has deleted all references to those domains.

Schnitt said that Facebook's security team believes the hackers intended to collect a large number of credentials, then use those accounts at a later time to send spam hawking fake pharmaceuticals and other goods to Facebook members.

The site fought off a similar attack two weeks ago, he said.

Privately held Facebook and rival social network MySpace, which is owned by News Corp, require senders of messages within the network to be members and hide user data from people who do not have accounts. Because of that, users tend to be far less suspicious of messages they receive.

Hackers used a phishing attack last year to spread a malicious virus known as Koobface (a reference to Facebook). It was downloaded onto Facebook members' PCs when they clicked on a link sent to them in an email that looked like it had been sent by a friend on Facebook.

Will Your Data Disappear When Your Online Storage Site Shuts Down?

Online storage sites, the toast of the Internet circa 2006, are shutting down in droves, putting the data and images of their users in jeopardy.

Online storage services that have announced closings in the past ten months include big names in tech: AOL (Xdrive and AOL Pictures, Hewlett-Packard (Upline), Sony (Image Station), and Yahoo (Briefcase). Plenty of lesser-known online storage firms also have kicked the bucket, including Digital Railroad and Streamload MediaMax, which turned into The Linkup.

Using these sites used to be a no-brainer - you just uploaded your summer-vacation pictures or your business files and then shared or used them anytime you wished. Now you have to wonder: Will my information still be around tomorrow?

Canadian freelance photographer Ryan Pyle lost thousands of digital photos when Digital Railroad abruptly shut down last October. The online storage service posted a note to its Web site stating that it ran out of money and would have to close. Digital Railroad gave customers 24 hours to remove their images before the files would be destroyed.

Pyle, who is based in Shanghai, China, lost over 7000 images that he had painstakingly edited, created captions for, keyword-tagged, and uploaded as part of his professional online archive. Pyle says the original digital images were safely stored locally, but the hundreds of hours he had spent creating an online portfolio were gone.

"One day everything was fine, and the next I had 24 hours to get all my images off the company's servers," Pyle says. Access to Digital Railroad following notification of the deadline was severely limited at first, as a crush of customers rushed to save images hosted on the

company's servers, according to Pyle. Pyle says he was able to retrieve fewer than a dozen of his images. He quit his efforts to save his portfolio at 2 a.m.

The failures of popular online storage services are giving cloud computing a black eye. For years Internet companies invited people to store photos and data online, promoting the services as smart alternatives to storing data on a local PC or backup drive. AOL once stated in its Xdrive service's marketing literature: "You'll never have to worry that a computer crash or virus will destroy all your files because they will always be safe 'n' sound up on Xdrive." Xdrive officially closed in mid-January.

The bloom is off online storage, according to Kurt Scherf, vice president and principal analyst with market research firm Park Associates. He says the online storage market is in the bust stage. "It comes down to economics," Scherf says. He notes that too many online storage firms are chasing after too few dollars. "There isn't a lot of money to be made by parking someone else's data on your servers," he says. "Companies without a business model are going to fail."

AOL spokesperson Allie Burns says that the AOL Pictures service couldn't financially justify its own existence. Over the past year, AOL as a company has undergone some painful cost-saving cuts. "We took a look at what products didn't make sense to maintain. And ultimately we needed to reduce cost," she says.

Still, some free online photo services claim that they can make storing your digital images profitable.

Representatives of PhotoWorks, American Greetings' free online photo site, say that business is good and that the site plans to stick around indefinitely.

Sally Babcock, American Greetings' general manager of digital photography, says the difference between PhotoWorks and its struggling competitors is that people actively use PhotoWorks to share images, buy prints, and purchase photo merchandise. She says that services such as AOL's focused too much on straight storage.

"It's expensive to maintain millions of images, but we're making it work," Babcock says. She declines to say how much PhotoWorks earns and what the associated costs are for storing millions of images. Experts estimate that it costs companies like PhotoWorks around $100 a month to manage 1TB of data.

As for data storage firms, Alan Williamson, cofounder of the cloud computing firm AW2.0, says that the most successful consumer services, such as EMC's Mozy online backup site or the collaboration site Box.net, are successful because they have a narrow focus on business users who are willing to pay monthly fees to share data with collegues, and to use the site's online tools to conduct regular data backups. Williamson warns that consumers should think twice about relying on free or low-cost sites that only store data.

The one thing that AOL and a lot of the big tech firms have done right: They have given their customers fair warning to move their data to a safe place before pulling the plug on the services. AOL, Hewlett-Packard, and Yahoo gave their customers months to remove data before shuttering their services. AOL brokered a deal with PhotoWorks and the Pixum photo-gift

site for image transfers. AOL now offers a tool to sideload data and photos to those new accounts, too.

Smaller firms such as Digital Railroad apparently didn't have the luxury of giving users fair warning. A company with no doomsday plan is setting up its customers for a data disaster, says Lauren Whitehouse of Enterprise Strategy Group.

What is problematic about the smaller online storage companies is that they engaged in a classic virtual land grab, Whitehouse says. "They rushed out and acquired as many customers as they could, fast, without thinking about the long term," she says. Inevitably, without a real business model, many of these companies tanked and took their customers' data with them. In better economic times, smaller storage firms might be able to look to the investment community for a financial lifeline, she says.

Kodak Gallery (originally called Ofoto) recently went from free to kind-of free in March.

"For Kodak it comes down to keeping the 5 million customers who are willing to pay for a service and recognizing that the other 70 million that pay nothing aren't worth as much," Park Associates' Scherf says. By keeping loyal customers over freeloaders, these companies increase the average revenue per user and reduce overhead costs.

That could be vital in a year like this one, in which Kodak reported to investors that it was on track to lose from $200 million to $400 million.

"Online storage is not like putting money in a bank," AW2.0's Williamson says. "You can't just assume data will be safe on the Internet until the day we die." He adds, "Users cannot absolve themselves from being 100 percent responsible for their own data."

EBay Cuts Auction Listing Fees for Casual Sellers

The online marketplace eBay is eliminating some upfront fees to attract more sellers who occasionally auction off items.

San Jose, Calif.-based eBay Inc. said Tuesday that users will soon be able to offer up to five items for auction every 30 days without paying the fees that eBay usually charges to list goods. Those listing fees usually run 10 cents to $4, depending on the item.

EBay users will still have to pay fees for items sold. Under a new fee schedule that applies to no-listing-fee items, sellers pay a flat 8.75 percent of the sale price, with a cap of $20 per item. Usually, sellers pay different rates depending on the sale price, with no cap.

EBay spokesman Usher Lieberman said the change, which takes effect June 16, is meant to make it simpler for consumers to list items on the site.

It also lowers the upfront risk for putting items up for sale; something that eBay hopes will lead more consumers to dust off items buried in their garages and closets and auction them off online.

"We love that inventory and we want more of it," Lieberman said.

The fee change does not apply to fixed-price listings, and sellers pay
standard fees after their five no-fee items.

The majority of the 25 million people who sell on eBay are occasional
sellers, and many of them stand to benefit from the change. Some could
end up paying more in fees, though, particularly for items that sell for
$50 to $450.

For example, if you sold a pair of earrings for $300, you would owe eBay
$20 under the new fee structure. Under the current system, you would pay
up to $3 to list the earrings and $11.82 as a final value fee, for a
total of less than $15. However, you'd pay the listing fee of up to $3
even if the earrings don't sell, whereas you'd owe nothing under the new
system.

Users can still choose the old fee structure for their first five items.

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